

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, September 9, 2009 – 6:00pm
Craft Recreation Center – 3911 Yanceyville Street

PRESENT MEMBERS: Rose Marie Ponton (Chair), Carl Brower, Jr (Vice-Chair), Paul Brown, Marc Bush, Ken Free, Lori Galbreath, Bill Knight

ABSENT MEMBERS: Steve Moore

OTHERS PRESENT: Gerry Alfano, Kristen Barbee, Steve Branson, Kathy Cates, John Hughes, Dan Maxson, Weesie Person, Marcie Richardson, Laurie Thore, Dr. Anthony Wade, Chris Wilson

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Craft Recreation Center. Rose Marie Ponton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 12, 2009 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

Craft Recreation Center Presentation

In the absence of Kim Porter, Craft Recreation Center Director, Weesie Person, Recreation Center Superintendent, presented the Commission with events and programs currently held at the center.

NEW BUSINESS

Citizen Donation

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that during the July Commission meeting discussions were held regarding a former community member, Ruth Wicker, who left a portion of her estate to Greensboro Parks and Recreation in the amount of \$900,000. City Council adopted a resolution on June 16, 2009 accepting the offer. Wilson read the following portion of the resolution:

The Parks and Recreation Department is authorized to reply with acceptance of donation from the Last Will and Testament and Revocable Trust of Ruth Wicker in the amount of \$900,000.

Wilson stated that staff has responded to the representatives of the Ruth Wicker estate and the Parks and Recreation Department will receive the \$900,000. A memorial to women request accompanied the \$900,000 donation, a request that Ms. Wicker envisioned. Ms Wicker wanted to highlight the significant women of Greensboro as part of the memorial. Her request also included that the memorial be located in a park. Wilson stated that it is an honor to receive this request but challenging to find a location in a park. In the past the Commission requested staff to investigate being able to afford gifts as it relates to maintenance, operation, etc. For example, when land is received how would the department operate that donation with current funding when the department can not extend its resources. With this being the situation with this request project options were explored. The most appropriate location is Barber Park as there is a community building slated for this park. This corridor will be changing immensely with the completion this fall of Gateway Gardens Phase I and Barber Park Phase I. The community building at Barber Park has come to the Commission's attention on multiple occasions as the community spoke on what they would like to have at Barber Park, such as a community building. Ms. Wicker also requested that the design work from her late husband be considered for this facility. This design is conceptual in nature and matched up very well for a community building at Barber Park. Wilson requested that the Commission grant staff the opportunity to provide the public and Commission with a conceptual design of this structure and how it would work at this location. This would be a community building that not only serves the purpose in terms of community needs but also memorializes women just as Ms. Wicker envisioned. Parks and Recreation has operational dollars programmed for this facility; therefore there is not a need to seek new funding. With Commission approval staff would meet with an architect, conduct a public forum in which the Barber Park community would have the opportunity to provide feedback.

Marc Bush, Member, inquired about the size of the community building.

Wilson replied stating approximately 7,000 square feet.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Carl Brower, Jr. and seconded for staff to proceed with the design work process. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Wilson requested the Commission to allow the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to participate and assist with finding ways to memorialize women and for staff to seek CSW input and participate in the process, such as defining displays, how to memorialize women, and parameters for being recognized.

Ponton stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women could join forces.

Dr. Anthony Wade, Interim Parks and Recreation Director, reported that he spoke with the Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson, Julie Lapham, who indicated that she supports collaborating with the Parks and Recreation Commission on this project.

Ponton stated that discussions between the two Commissions would begin soon.

OLD BUSINESS

Cell Phone Tower Update

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, stated that a couple of months ago a representative from American Cell Tower Company approached the Commission seeking permission to meet with staff to develop guidelines and a possible recommendation for the Commission to consider allowing cell phone towers in Parks and Recreation facilities. The Commission was also informed that Parks and Recreation staff would meet with the city representative who coordinates all cell towers on city property and American Cell Tower representatives. This meeting was held and discussions were focused on possibilities of cell phone towers in certain facilities. It is taking time for the City to work through this request as it is an approach different than the city has ever had. Location of the cell tower would be reviewed case by case. An update will be given at the next Commission meeting.

War Memorial Stadium Update

John Hughes, Youth & Community Programs Manager, reported that the stakeholders, Interim City Manager Bob Morgan, and Parks and Recreation staff met to review and discuss the proposal submitted by the stakeholders. Hughes distributed diagrams of the current structure and diagrams of the stakeholders proposed structure. The proposed structure would seat 1,500 people, include a locker room, restroom, first aid room, a maintenance building, catering room, and perhaps host a location for a city market at a cost of 3.7 million dollars. There was some discussion of placing 10x10 tents outside the stadium for a city market. This proposal will be presented during a City Council briefing in October 2009.

Bill Knight, Member, stated that the city's general fund transfers 1 ½ -2 million dollars to the coliseum annually to recover losses. Knight stated that in 2006 there was an ACC Tournament and the coliseum operated well in the black, but yet received the subsidy from the city's general fund. There will be another ACC Tournament this year and Knight asked if the coliseum could afford to forgo the 1.5-2 million dollar subsidies that perhaps could be used towards the War Memorial Stadium. Knight stated that he would like for a city representative to convince him that it could not be done.

Hughes stated that a portion of the funding for the stadium is scheduled to come from the 2/3 bond.

Foundation Golf Tournament

Marcie Richardson, Friends of Greensboro Parks & Recreation Foundation Executive Director, informed the Commission that due to low participation registrations and sponsorships the Friends of Greensboro Parks and Recreation Foundation Golf Tournament has been cancelled.

ADDENDUM

Barber Park Construction Update

Steve Branson, Regional Parks Superintendent, distributed photos of the construction at Barber Park. The photos included newly constructed picnic shelters, the first layer of asphalt, new sidewalks, restroom/shower facility, concession stand and office structure, sprayground (will be fenced and will have an admission fee), and a playground. The project is approximately 85% complete with a total completion date projected for October 15, 2009 with a grand opening in the spring of 2010. Branson stated that one of the shelters will hold 144 people and the remaining 5 shelters will hold up to 80 people. Shelter fees will remain the same.

Paul Brown, Member, inquired what type of material will be used around the playground.

Wilson replied stating that a rubberized material will be poured around the playground.

Carl Brower, Jr, Member, inquired how the warranty for the sprayground would be affected since the equipment will not be utilized until next year.

Wilson stated that there is a one year warranty. Dialogue will take place for the possibility of extending the warranty.

Branson added that the system will have to be tested for 3 days. A year warranty will last through the first season. On behalf of Eddie Pugh, Barber Park Manager, Branson invited the Commission to visit Barber Park and offered a guided tour.

Downtown Greenway Benches

Wilson stated that there was a news story last week that reported soliciting activity at the bench location along Phase I of the Downtown Greenway. It was reported to City Council Tuesday evening that there were alleged illicit activities on these benches near Urban Ministries adjacent to Bilbro Street. This concern concluded that staff needed to be investigative and speak with surrounding residents. Police immediately increased their presence in that area. They had not been alerted to any illicit activity prior to this notification. Parks and Recreation staff met with near-by residents this past Thursday and discussed potential options for a solution. One option was to install a flashcam, a metal device that is solar powered, motion activated, and bullet proof up to a 9mm. A voice will come on alerting those they are in an area that is restricted and to leave the area or a series of 3 photos will be taken. Flashcams are rotated between 102 parks in Greensboro. A flashcam on the Greenway was installed Friday morning. Residents were given a demonstration of how the flashcam works. Pictures from Friday-Monday nights were downloaded that produced only one photo taken of someone walking while on their cell phone. Dialogue continues and another meeting on site with the residents will be held Friday. An update will be given to the Commission if there are any other concerns.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Mary Hess, 1114 14th Street, spoke to the rules of the Farmer's Market and her concern of ongoing vendor violations.

Jim Rientjes, Farmer's Market vendor, 636 South Cedar Street, spoke to his concern of the Farmer's Market being transferred to the state agricultural service and those discussions regarding this transfer have not been held in a public forum. Rientjes is concerned in the difference of their rules and regulations compared to current rules and regulations. Rientjes requested reasoning as to why this item has not been held in a public forum.

Chris Wilson stated that currently management at the Farmer's Market remains the same; however there have been exploratory discussions with two groups, one with the Farmer's Market in regards to self governing the Market and one with the Guilford County State Agricultural Extension Service. Prior to bringing items to the public or the Commission staff must know if these are viable options. Staff is not to the point of presenting any options to the Commission or the public. When and if there becomes the potential, staff would present it to the Commission for approval. The City would always remain owners of the Farmer's Market. Discussions held were in regards to changes in management. At this time there is nothing to report because there is not a definitive answer.

Dr. Wade added that one of the responsibilities to the Farmer's Market is to explore ways that it can operate in the most efficient, effective and ethical matter. Staff will always explore different ways of improving service. The Commission would be apprised of these type issues and certainly would have discussion with the public. At this time there have been discussions but clearly no decision has been made. Whatever is decided will be a transparent process.

John Handler, Climax, NC, expressed concern regarding the Farmer's Market Management and their reversal of consequences served to violating vendors. Handler also expressed concern regarding the Mayor intervening with management trying to enforce the rules of the Market.

Chris Wilson stated that there have been penalties and those responsible have been served. Any time there is an entrapment it is addressed; however will not be discussed with other vendors because it is unprofessional and inappropriate. Often times there is a perception that staff is not addressing issues because there is not a visible reaction. There have been occasions where staff has dealt with issues and continue to do so. There is at times a level of dialogue that needs to continue beyond a level that cannot be seen at face value. Staff treats each situation with a level of equity and will continue to do so.

Mike Faucette, 5112 NC 150 East, Brown Summit, requested an investigation of the location of a post at the Farmer's Market that caused a customer incident. Faucette also expressed concern regarding rumors that circulate amongst vendors at the Farmer's Market.

Dr. Wade stated the location of the post will be looked into.

Bill Snider, vendor, 1507 N. Elam Avenue, expressed concern regarding the Agricultural Extension Service managing the Market and would like to be kept informed of such happenings regarding the Market.

Carol Pryor, vendor, Rockingham County, stated that the vendors want to feel valued and feel as though they are unsupported. Pryor requested that the rules be reviewed to see if they are in the best interest of everyone involved with the Market.

Ponton stated, on behalf of the Commission, that it is the Commission's intent to sustain this Market that has been in operation for 135 years. It is a great asset to Greensboro and this Board does not have any intent of abandoning it in any way and want it to operate as best as it can. Ponton requested everyone to have a good attitude and be a good neighbor.

Brower stated that he visits the Farmer's Market on occasion, most recently a couple of weeks ago, and witnessed a vendor helping another vendor who ran out of change and another vendor who assisted someone who ran out of bags. Brower stated that the Commission reviewed and adopted the rules and regulations a few months ago. Expectations are to follow those rules; however if changes need to be made then they will be made. As a Commissioner I expect those rules to be carried out and trust staff will do the right thing. As Wilson previously stated, some things cannot be discussed as it is not ethical. Sometimes Wilson cannot make a decision and has to

seek higher authority or contact the City’s Legal Department. Before making accusations make sure you have the facts from the person who can give you the facts.

An unknown speaker expressed concern that what has been said between Dr. Wade and Wilson has been contradictory and asked how things can be presented in a transparent manner when some items cannot be discussed.

Dr. Wade clarified stating that there are certain items that are legal matters that cannot be discussed. How staff will proceed toward making decisions in the best interest of the Farmer’s Market management are the issues that will be transparent as possible.

INTERIM DIRECTOR’S COMMENTS

Dr. Wade stated that the Parks and Recreation Department has a Commission with Members addressing a number of different issues whether it is discussions regarding how technology has allowed cell phone tower discussions which would provide the ability for someone to call 911 in an area in which before had no signal to notify someone for rescue assistance, the issues with War Memorial Stadium which is in the process of being preserved in order for it to continue to be of service to the community, Barber Park and the great happenings there, and continuing improvements to the Farmer’s Market. The Parks and Recreation Department and Commission are about one thing and that is trying to ensure that the community is served in a way that services are second to none. Dr. Wade stated that he appreciates people approaching and talking to him bringing forth concerns and giving constructive feedback and constructive criticism. Comments are welcomed and honesty and candor are appreciated. Dr. Wade thanked everyone for attending.

Dr. Wade informed the Commission that perhaps by the end of October or beginning of November a Parks and Recreation Director should be selected. The assessment design is complete on how candidates will be evaluated. Dr. Wade has had conversations with the consultants on specificity on how to create realistic exercises. There are a strong group of candidates. Parks and Recreation impacts quality of life in this community and staff wants to make the best decision possible.

COMMISSIONER’S COMMENTS

Paul Brown thanked everyone for attending and bringing forth the Farmer’s Market concerns.

Bill Knight stated that he was asked the night before by someone what project he would like to see finished and he informed them War Memorial Stadium.

Rose Marie Ponton thanked everyone for attending. Ponton thanked Commission Members for attending the Citizen Board Member Forum. During the forum Bernadette White received the Jack “Swede” Frauson award.

With no further business Ponton adjourned the meeting at 7:16pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation